

The Book of Exodus

The Call of Moses

Text: Exodus 2:23 – 4:17

Introduction:

1. The life of Moses divides into three sections of 40 years each.
 - a. For his first 40 years, Moses lived in Egypt.
 - b. For his next 40 years, Moses lived in Midian.
 - c. For his last 40 years, Moses led the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan.
2. When Moses was 80 years old, the timing of God drew near for the deliverance of Egypt.
3. Now, Moses was prepared to be the leader that God needed – even though he did not seem himself as such.
4. Thus, God issued His call to Moses to return to Egypt...

I. The Awareness of God

(Exodus 2:23-25)

- A. As time moved on, things only seemed to get worse for the children of Israel.
- B. One king died and was replaced by another; yet, their suffering in bondage continued.
- C. Thus, the children of Israel cried out to God because of their suffering.
 1. The Hebrew word for “sigh” also means, “To groan or mourn.”
 2. The word for “cry” means, “To shriek from anguish; to call out for help.”
 3. They were supposed to learn an important lesson from their suffering (cf. 22:22-27).
 4. There is also a lesson for the Christian (cf. James 5:1-11).
- D. When they cried to the Lord, He heard them and remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 1. This does not mean that God had forgotten (cf. Genesis 8:1).
 2. Instead, He called to mind His covenant and acted toward the keeping of it.
 3. The time for the fulfillment of God’s promise had come (cf. 2 Peter 3:8).
- E. So, God turned His attention upon the children of Israel and “took knowledge” of them (ASV).

II. The Appearance of God

(Exodus 3:1-6)

- A. In Midian, Moses had become a shepherd of his father-in-law’s flocks.
- B. On this occasion, he led the flocks to the “backside of the desert” and came to Horeb.
 1. To the Hebrews, the “backside” probably indicated the west of the desert.
 2. The word for “desert” actually means, “Wilderness” or “Pasture.”
 3. In this deserted region, a mountain called Horeb was located.
 4. Horeb means, “Dry, dried up, or desert.”
 5. This was likely the name of the region, then given to the mountain also known as Sinai.
 6. Here, it is called the “mountain of God” – in anticipation of the events that will unfold at this location.
- C. Here, God appeared to Moses in the form of a bush that burned with fire, but was not consumed by the flames.
- D. God called to Moses as He had previously to Abraham (Gen. 22:1, 11; cf. 46:2).
- E. Moses stood in awe on holy ground as God identified Himself.

Lesson Three

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- F. Obviously, this appearance of God was miraculous.
 - 1. A bush in the wilderness may be struck by lightning and catch fire, but it will be consumed by the flames.
 - 2. This bush burned without being devoured – it continued to exist as a bush.
 - 3. God wanted to prove to Moses that this instruction was from Him.
- G. There is also an important lesson in this story about approaching God.
 - 1. When we assemble upon the first day of the week, we approach God in worship.
 - 2. Through the name of Jesus, we approach God in prayer.
 - 3. Yet, when one approaches God, he must do so with submission (vs. 4), reverence (vs. 5), humility, and fear (vs. 6).

III. The Appeal of God (Exodus 3:7-10)

- A. God had not forgotten or overlooked the suffering of His people.
- B. He had heard their cries and was ready to take action to deliver them from Egypt.
- C. God's plan for saving His people also included bringing judgment upon the nation of Egypt and the nations who lived in the land of Canaan.
 - 1. God had promised Abraham that he would inherit the land of Canaan.
 - 2. Yet, he had foretold that this inheritance would not be given to Abraham's descendants immediately (Genesis 15).
 - 3. Patiently, God gave the nations of men time and opportunity to repent and to obey His Word.
 - 4. Yet, as they continued in their sins, the cup of God's wrath grew full.
 - 5. In Genesis 15, the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.
 - 6. Now, it is; and, God will use His judgment of them as the means of giving Canaan to the children of Israel.
- D. This is the first time (but certainly not the last) that the land of Canaan is called a "land flowing with milk and honey."
 - 1. Of course, this means that it was a bountiful land, good for agriculture.
 - 2. The grazing of animals would produce abundant milk.
 - 3. The growing of crops would provide plentiful honey (both from bees and syrup from the juice of grapes).
- E. Yet, in order for God to accomplish His purpose, He had to send Moses to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

IV. The Answers of God (Exodus 3:11 – 4:17)

- A. When Moses was given this command by God, he began to make excuses to keep from obeying.
- B. God knew that Moses was ready and able to accomplish this mission; yet, Moses had doubts and fears.
- C. His first excuse was: "Who am I, that I should go?"
 - 1. God's answer was, "Certainly I will be with thee."
 - 2. In truth, this should have been all Moses needed to now.
 - 3. But, like so many of us, too often that answer is not good enough.
 - 4. As further confirmation, God promised that Moses not only would deliver Israel from Egypt, but also return to the very mountain where he stood.
- D. His second excuse was: "Who will I tell them has sent me?"

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1. This is really a question of authority, and a valid consideration.
2. Yet, again, God replied by stating that He was all-sufficient.
3. This provided an opportunity for God to emphasize His eternal nature and character.
4. God declared that His name is, “I AM” or “I AM THAT I AM.”
 - a. God is the eternal, self-existent, ever-present One.
 - b. He is.
 - c. He is unchanging in His nature and character.
 - d. He would be to Moses and to Israel what He is.
 - e. Jesus applied this name to Himself (John 8:58), showing His deity.
5. Furthermore, he assured Moses that the elders of Israel would believe him.
6. They were to request permission from Pharaoh to go into the wilderness to sacrifice unto God.
 - a. Some have accused Moses (and God) of being dishonest in making this request, claiming that they intended to leave and never return.
 - b. In truth, this was a means of showing the stubbornness of Pharaoh.
 - c. God always intended to free Israel; and, He did not have to resort to dishonesty and deception to do it.
7. God was aware that Pharaoh would refuse to release the Israelites, so He had already planned great wonders to perform in Egypt.
8. When they left, they would spoil the Egyptians and go out with abundance.
- E. His third excuse was: “They will not believe or listen.”
 1. God does not ask man to believe or follow Him based upon what is sometimes called “blind faith.”
 2. Instead, He gives evidence to prove and confirm His words.
 3. To Moses, God gave two miraculous signs to prove His promise to Moses and to serve as tools to convince the Israelites of the same.
 - a. The first was the turning of Moses’ rod (staff or branch) into a serpent.
 - b. This was a genuine miracle, for Moses fled from the snake.
 - c. Furthermore, when Moses caught it by the tail, it became a rod again.
 - d. The second was the making of Moses’ hand leprous – and then restoring it to health.
 4. He also gave the promise of a third miraculous sign.
 - a. This involved the turning of water into blood.
 - b. Obviously, this alludes to the initiation of the “Ten Plagues” upon Egypt.
 - c. It is important to notice that this would only take place after the failure of the first signs to convince and produce submission.
 - d. God would still offer mercy to Egypt with judgment and punishment coming as a last resort.
- F. His fourth excuse was: “I am not eloquent.”
 1. Moses claimed that he was not a “man of words” but was “heavy of mouth and tongue.”
 2. Granted, some ability in this area would be helpful in addressing the Pharaoh.
 3. However, this was no valid excuse for God promised to be with and his mouth!

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- G. The real problem was that Moses did not want to go and do as God had said.
 - 1. He declared: “O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou shalt send.”
 - 2. Some interpret this to mean, “Lord, please send someone else” (ESV).
 - 3. The more likely meaning is that Moses assented to God’s command, but unwillingly and with great reluctance.
- H. Because of Moses’ attitude, God became angry with him.
- I. Still, God provided another answer to Moses’ doubt – he would allow Aaron, Moses’ brother, to do the speaking for him.
- J. So, with Aaron as his spokesman and his rod as a reminder of God’s miraculous power, Moses was ready to return to Egypt.